United Nations

Daily Highlights

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- General Assembly appoints Boutros Boutros-Ghali of Egypt as new Secretary-General of United Nations, for a five-year term beginning 1 January 1992.

- Nelson Mandela tells Assembly that desired political settlement in South Africa cannot survive if question of mass poverty is not addressed; sanctions only to be lifted corresponding to progress being made in that country.

- Assembly would welcome convening of Middle East peace conference in Madrid as "significant step", according to draft approved by Palestinian Rights Committee.

- United Nations human rights advisory team visits Lesotho to help with election planning.

- Draft in Economic and Financial Committee seeks global moratorium on driftnet fishing by end of next year.

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Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the Deputy Prime Minister of Egypt, was appointed by acclamation by the General Assembly this morning the sixth Secretary-General of the United Nations, for a five-year term beginning on 1 January 1992.

In a statement to the Assembly, Mr. Boutros-Ghali said that, in the name of every African, he wished to express appreciation for the opportunity afforded to Africa, through his election, to take part in the service of the international community. "Africa feels ready to make its contribution by virtue of its creative ability and recent achievements in the international arena", he said.

He went on to say that because he belonged to Egypt, an Arab African State that bordered the Mediterranean Sea, which, throughout the ages had been a crossroad for many cultures, it was his fervent desire to communicate

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cultural legacy through mutual cooperation, and to raise the banner of peace wherever there was underdevelopment, conflict and tension in the world.

He was well aware, he stated, that the Organization faced the need for fundamental readjustments in response to a world in constant transformation. A number of basic issues confronted the international community, he said. Outlining those issues, Mr. Boutros-Ghali cited the need for strengthening of United Nations peace-keeping and peace-making; narrowing of the gap between the north and the south; and the strengthening of the fundamental freedoms and democratic institutions as well as democracy on the international level.

In his statement to the Assembly, Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar expressed his satisfaction with the unanimous decision of the General Assembly. He said he was happy to leave his delicate post in the hands of an Egyptian of "notable skill and courage", who was also endowed with "the vision and pragmatism necessary in the times to come". He was also happy that, as he left his post, the Organization was no longer on the sidelines, but was at the hub of world affairs. Only in one respect -- financial insolvency, not due to poor management -- was there a problem, Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar said.

The Secretary-General-designate holds several positions related to his background in law, international affairs and political science, among them, his membership in the institute of International Law, the International Institute of Human Rights, the African Society of Political Studies and the Academie des Sciences Morales et Politique (Academie Francaise, Paris).

He has participated in many conferences, meetings and symposia over the last four decades. They deal, among other things, with international law, human rights, economic and social development, decolonization, the Middle East question, non-alignment, and Afro-Arab cooperation.

In September 1978, Mr. Boutros-Ghali attended the Camp David Summit Conference and had a role in negotiating the Camp David accords between Egypt and Israel, which were signed in 1979. He has led many delegations of his country to, among others, meetings of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, as well as to the Summit Conference of the French and the African Heads of State. He has similarly headed Egypt's delegation to the General Assembly sessions in 1979, 1982 and 1990.

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Following the appointment of the new Secretary-General, Nelson Mandela, President of the African National Congress, addressed the Assembly, as it continued its debate on South Africa. Mr. Mandela said that South Africa had embarked on its own race to normality and that the black majority could see on the horizon, the "new glorious entity" which would no longer be spoken of as the "pariah among nations".

He however pointed out that the new South Africa would have to address the burning question of mass poverty, which afflicted millions, especially the black population. The question of the gross racial imbalances in the

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distribution of income, wealth, land and opportunity had to be dealt with, he said.

Mr. Mandela went on to say that continued international pressure was necessary to end the apartheid system in South Africa and sanctions should only be lifted in phases that corresponded to the progress being made in that country. Two major phases would be: the establishment of an interim government; and the election of a new government based on a democratic constitution. The United Nations should "heed the voice of the oppressed" by handling sanctions in that manner.

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According to a draft resolution approved by the Palestinian Rights Committee yesterday, the General Assembly would welcome the convening of the Middle East peace conference in Madrid which began on 30 October. The Assembly would also note that the conference "constitutes a significant step towards the establishment of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region".

The text further stated that a United Nations-sponsored peace conference on the Middle East, with the participation of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the five permanent members of the Security Council, would contribute to the promotion of peace in the region. It would also have the Assembly note the "expressed desire and endeavours to place the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, under the supervision of the United Nations for a transitional period, as part of the peace process".

The text was one of five draft resolutions on the question of Palestine approved by the Committee. The other four drafts deal with the uprising (intifadah) of the Palestinian people and the work of various United Nations bodies on behalf of the rights of the Palestinian people.

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A three-member United Nations expert team began last week an official visit to Lesotho to provide assistance in the legal and technical aspects of democratic elections for the parliamentary elections, scheduled for 1992. The mission is taking place within the the United Nations Programme of Advisory Services and Technical Assistance in the Field of Human Rights.

The last elections in Lesotho took place in January 1970. Last year, the present Government decided to hold elections and convened a National Constituent Assembly to draft a new constitution. The Government informed the United Nations of its earnest wish that the 1992 elections should meet international standards of free and fair elections.

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A 50 per cent reduction in large-scale pelagic driftnet fishing efforts by all members of the international community by 30 June 1992, and a global moratorium on all such fishing on the high seas of the world's oceans and seas by 31 December 1992, are among the terms of a 28-Power draft text introduced by the United States yesterday afternoon in the General Assembly's Second Committee (Economic and Financial).

The introduction of the driftnet fishing draft follows last week's debate during which speakers said such practices harmed endangered or threatened species and called for a moratorium on driftnet fishing by the end of next year. During that debate, Japan also announced that it had reached agreement with the United States on a package of measures by which Japan would limit its fishing activities in the North Pacific for one more fishing season and impose a full moratorium by 31 December 1992. The representative of Japan, Karsumi Sezaki, said his Government had taken into account the concerns expressed by Member States before reaching this agreement.

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